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AUTHOR Mahan, James M.; Stachowski, Laura L.
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ABSTRACT

Feedback from educators in England, Scotland, and the Republic of Ireland was obtained regarding the performance of U.S. student teachers in the schools of these nations. Reported in this paper are the educators' observations and beliefs pertaining to topics such as the professional and cultural/social strengths of U.S. student teachers; major cultural/social "mistakes" often made by U.S. student teachers; ways in which they could better prepare for classroom teaching assignments in overseas schools; goals motivating them to seek placement in overseas schools; and ways in which the foreign pupils benefitted from the U.S. student teachers, among others. Based on the feedback, recommendations are offered to student participants and university/college faculty for the improvement of teaching experiences in overseas nations. In addition, the need for internationalizing teacher education programs in the United States is recognized, and the Overseas Student Teaching Project at Indiana University is described. (Author)

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Feedback from British and Irish Educators for Improving Overseas Teaching Experiences

James M. Mahan and Laura L. Stachowski
Indiana University-Bloomington

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Feedback From British and Irish Educators

for Improving Overseas Teaching Experiences

Teaching experiences abroad for pre-service and in-service teachers are beginning to receive increased emphasis in school districts and teacher preparation institutions throughout the United States. Overseas teaching experiences have been identified as an important way of broadening an individual's international perspective, of enhancing his or her pluralistic or multicultural outlook, and of promoting his or her professional and personal development. Several studies have provided evidence that outcomes such as these are positive consequences of participation in overseas teaching experiences.

For example, Palmer, Cartford, DeVargas, Trueman, and Reyes (1980) share their personal perspectives as U.S. educated teachers in Colombian schools. In considering the cultural differences encountered and the resulting insight and personal growth, Palmer and his colleagues conclude that:

> The overseas teaching experience has been invaluable, for literally it has forced the critical examination of not only the more dominant trends and practices in U.S. education but ... personal beliefs, habits, and values, also. (p. 38)

Similarly, Barnes and Hunter (1985) describe the conflict of educational ideologies experienced by American student teachers in English primary schools. These young educators found it necessary to modify and adapt their teaching behaviors in order to conform to school organization and curricular requirements, as well as successfully perform the role of progressive primary school teacher. Finally, Mahan and Stachowski (in press) discuss several important consequences of eight-week student teaching assignments in the school systems of Great Britain, the Republic of Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand. Among the

outcomes reported by their Overseas Project participants are the acquisition of new teaching skills and techniques, the unfolding of an understanding and appreciation of different cultures, increased confidence as effective educators, and the general enhancement of personal and professional growth and development.

Thus, the benefits of overseas teaching experiences to pre-service and in-service educators are many and certainly warrant the inclusion of optional, international teaching components in teacher preparation programs. Evaluative feedback from participants serves to justify the existence of such components and provides a valuable source of information that can be utilized to improve the quality of overseas teaching experiences.

An equally useful source of feedback could be obtained from the overseas educators with whom the U.S. student teachers interact on a daily basis, both professionally and socially. How do these foreign teachers and headmasters view the U.S. teacher in terms of his or her professional preparation? What do they perceive as significant cultural/social strengths, as exhibited by the U.S. teacher, and what cultural/social "mistakes" have they witnessed? In what ways do they believe the pupils in the local classroom benefit from the presence and efforts of the U.S. teacher? How do they think U.S. teacher educators can better prepare individuals for overseas teaching experiences? Few studies have examined questions such as these, leaving untapped a valuable resource for evaluative information.

The purpose of this paper is to present survey data obtained from educators in England, Scotland, and the Republic of Ireland pertaining to the professional and social performance of U.S. student teachers who completed eight-week teaching assignments in the schools of those nations. Suggestions for the

improvement of international teaching experiences, based on the data, will be discussed. In order to provide a framework for the examination of these topics, a brief description follows of the overseas student teaching program from which the data were derived. (For a more thorough account, see Mahan and Stachowski, in press.)

Overseas Student Teaching:
A Project Description

The Overseas Student Teaching Project has been implemented for the past ten years by Indiana University, on the Bloomington campus. Offered as an optional supplement to regular student teaching, this increasingly popular project has prepared and placed over 200 student teachers for teaching assignments in the schools of England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Australia, and New Zealand. Persons receiving certification in elementary and secondary education have participated, as well as those receiving "all grades" certification in Music, Special Education, and Physical Education.

Project participants undergo extensive preparation beginning in the academic year prior to the overseas teaching experience. Preparatory requirements are outlined in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

The readings, term paper, seminars, and workshops deal with educational, cultural, social, and political topics relative to the host nations. The purposes of the preparatory requirements are to familiarize the students with the educational system in which they will be expected to operate and to orient them toward the culture and lifestyle of which they will become a part. These

requirements also serve as rather effective self-screening and staff-selection steps in that applicants who may only want to play "tourists" are discouraged by the intensive preparatory work.

In order to receive State certification, Project participants must student teach in Indiana for a minimum of nine weeks prior to their overseas experience. During the Indiana placement period, classroom teachers provide the student teacher with continuous informal feedback and sumbit formal evaluative scales at least three times. In addition, Project staff conduct four observations, each followed by a conference with the student teacher during which constructive criticism and suggestions for the improvement of teaching and management techniques are offered.

Overseas school placements for Project participants are made by the Foundation for International Education in River Falls, Wisconsin, which provides this placement service for numerous institutions in the United States. Upon receiving from the Foundation the name and address of the headmaster and school placement, the student initiates correspondence with the headmaster. An exchange of information between the student and headmaster and/or classroom teacher to whom the student has been assigned then follows over the next several months. During this period, the headmaster arranges housing for the student teacher with a family living in the community, thus affording an even greater opportunity for immersion into the culture of the host nation through direct observation and participation.

Once in the host schools, Project participants are expected to engage fully in all teacher-related functions of the school, to serve as guest speakers in other classrooms or schools, and to submit several evaluative reports to the Overseas Project staff. The data amassed from these reports indicate that

highly positive experiences, leading to new insights, better teaching, and many happy memories are accrued by student teachers in overseas settings (Mahan and Stachowski, in press).

Thus, the Overseas Project has proven to be a successful model for providing pre-service teachers with international teaching and living experiences. The feedback obtained from Project participants has been used to improve the quality of the experiences by making modifications in the preparatory requirements to better meet the needs of the U.S. student teachers in their overseas settings.

Recently, survey data have been collected from overseas educators pertaining to their impressions of and reactions to U.S. student teachers who have completed teaching assignments in their schools. Feedback from these individuals is a significant--but often overlooked--source of information that can provide an alternative perspective of the overseas experience and lead to Project modifications that previously may not have been considered. The following section will describe the procedure by which the survey was conducted and examine the feedback gathered from overseas headmasters and teachers.

The Survey and Its Findings:
Perspectives of British and Irish Educators

Procedure

During a recent supervisory visit by a Project coordinator to schools in England, Scotland, and the Republic of Ireland where U.S. student teachers were placed, a survey form was distributed to headmasters and teachers who had observed and/or worked directly with the student teachers. Respondents were provided with stamped envelopes addressed to the Overseas Project director at Indiana University. Thirty survey forms were distributed. Upon the coordinator's return to the States, an additional 20 surveys and stamped envelopes were mailed

to educators in England, Scotland, and Ireland who had worked with Overseas Project student teachers in the previous academic year. It was assumed that these educators' experiences with the students were sufficiently recent for their feelings and beliefs about the students' performance to be relatively salient.

Content of survey. The survey, entitled "Observations of Overseas Teachers Relative to Student Teachers from the United States," contained the following directive introduction:

> You have accepted one or more student teachers from the United States into your classroom or school. You have heard educators in your school discussing the performance of student teachers from the United States. We need your "input," your observations, your beliefs relative to overseas student teaching experiences in order to improve those experiences. Please think about the student(s) you have accepted, observed, or discussed and then respond candidly to the following items. Your responses will remain anonymous. Thank you very much for providing "feedback" in our Overseas Student Teaching Project.

The survey items probed for personal observations and beliefs pertaining to topics such as the professional and cultural/social strengths of U.S. student teachers; major cultural/social "mistakes" often made by U.S. student teachers; ways in which they could better prepare for classroom teaching assignments in overseas schools; goals motivating them to seek placements in overseas schools; ways in which the pupils benefitted from the presence of U.S. student teachers; among others. Space was also provided to designate the nation and the level of school--primary or secondary--from which the responses originated.

Respondents. A total of 30 completed surveys (60%) were returned to the Overseas Project director. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents hailed from England, 26% from Scotland, and 7% from Ireland. The high percentage of English

respondents parallels the overall percentage of Project participants who choose to student teach in England; it may be that a greater familiarity with or knowledge of this nation prompts students to select English communities more frequently than the others. Additionally, an equal split emerged between primary and secondary schools, with each level represented by 45% of the respondents. The remaining 10% were from special education schools which included pupils at both the primary and secondary levels.

Survey Findings

Educators' responses to each survey item were thematically categorized, with percentages figured for each category. Responses given only once were classified as miscellaneous; however these were often just as interesting and informative as the responses that were given at higher frequencies. Following is an outline of the survey findings, including specific examples of the overseas educators' comments regarding their personal observations and beliefs about U.S. student teachers in overseas teaching experiences.

Strengths of U.S. student teachers. As shown in Table 2, several categories of professional strengths were generated by the British and Irish educators who observed and/or interacted with students from the United States.

Insert Table 2 about here

A total of 50% of the responding educators believe that U.S. student teachers are socially adept and develop good relationships with both school faculty/staff and pupils. "Pleasant character," "friendly disposition," "politeness," and "outgoing personality" are examples of responses in this category. Forty-three percent of the educators stated that the student teachers are easily able and

very willing to adapt to a different education system, different educational practices, and a different culture, and 36% indicated a high level of enthusiasm in the student teachers' approach to teaching.

The student teachers were also viewed as the addition of a competent professional to the school faculty by 30% of the respondents and as presenting new and well-prepared materials and lessons in the classroom, also by 30%. These professional strengths are probably the result of the nine-plus weeks of student teaching in Indiana prior to the overseas experience. A willingness to learn and a willingness to participate each accounted for responses by 20% of the educators; high motivation by 17%; and 7% each for self-confidence, caring attitude towards the pupils, and miscellaneous responses. Interestingly, personality attributes--not teaching skills--make up more than 50% of the total responses given for this item.

In general, the overseas educators appear pleased in many respects with the professionalism of U.S. student teachers. Overseas Project participants are usually mature, personable, and capable individuals who are dedicated to teaching.

Said one primary school educator in England:

> Our student teacher's commitment to her job was excellent. She was very willing to help with all school activities and gave us a great deal of time outside school hours. She was a delight to have with us.

And a Scottish headmaster's comment:

> Our student teacher of English arrived in a period where industrial action was at its height, where there was an almost complete halt to extracurricular games, drama productions, and school visits. Yet, despite this, she made a tremendous impact on the school, got to know the pupils well, made friends with several of the staff, and made a considerable impression on the English Department with her

> outgoing attitude and hard work. She also impressed us by the extra study and work which she did in school for her U.S. reports. She was in effect a dedicated professional who appeared to have a fine future.

Cultural/social strengths and "mistakes" of U.S. student teachers. Overseas educators were also asked to list the cultural/social strengths of the U.S. student teachers, as well as the "mistakes" they observed. Their responses to these survey items are outlined in Table 3.

Insert Table 3 about here

Concerning cultural/social strengths, "socialization skills" again received top ranking, with over half (57%) of the educators listing this response, further reinforcing the notion that U.S. student teachers are perceived as friendly, likable people by educators in foreign nations. Sharing the top ranking with responses listed by 57% of the educators is the category of "first-hand cultural knowledge of U.S." Student teachers from the U.S. are viewed by overseas educators as valuable sources of cultural information--as "living comparisons," in the words of one respondent, to enrich the lives of the pupils by providing them first-hand experiences with U.S. citizens. Stated a Scottish educator:

> A strength would obviously be a familiarity with a great variety of ethnic--including Black--groups and, I would hope, less prejudice.

The remaining categories of responses--self-confidence (30%), miscellaneous (30%), adaptability (23%), enthusiasm (13%), and keenness to communicate (13%)--closely match the educators' perceptions of professional strengths discussed previously. Again, U.S. student teachers in overseas schools are perceived as having important contributions to make to the education of the pupils and the general operation of the schools. As an Irish educator put it, U.S. student

teachers are "rewarding people."

Concerning the cultural/social "mistakes" made by U.S. student teachers, three categories share top ranking with 30% of the educators listing responses for each. Interestingly, while some overseas educators view the Project participants' confidence as a professional and social/cultural strength, others view it as coming on too strongly at times. Comments such as "overly direct," "talks too much," and "rather over-confident and not willing to listen and accept advice" are representative responses in this category. Americans have often been typified as overly-direct, over-confident persons, by citizens of other nations. Perhaps Americans need to exercise a greater sensitivity when visiting in foreign lands, keeping in the forefront of our minds that we are guests in those lands, regardless of our purposes for being there.

A second category to which 30% of the educators responded is simply that "no mistakes were made." This is encouraging since it suggests that at least some U.S. student teachers do adapt their behaviors to the values, mores, and practices of the overseas schools, communities, and homes in which they work and live. It may also be that educators giving this response felt any cultural/social blunders that did occur were inconsequential or resulted in new cultural insights for all involved.

The final category of responses listed by 30% of the educators is "language differences." This is to be expected, even when U.S. student teachers are placed in English-speaking nations. Examples include talking too quickly and using unfamiliar expressions and spellings of words. Overseas educators believed that pupils occasionally had difficulty understanding the U.S. student teachers due to differences such as these combined with an unfamiliar American accent. Twenty-seven percent of the respondents indicated a lack of cultural sensitivity

on the part of the Overseas Project participants. Comments included "equating smallness with inferiority," "preconceptions of English aloofness and formality," and "using telephone ad-lib." During the evening seminars and intensive workshop within the preparatory phase of the Overseas Project, attention is given to the importance of cultural sensitivity. For example, telephone calls in private homes are metered, and student teachers are advised to use the phones sparingly and/or pay for their personal calls. Occasionally, however, some students will disregard our suggestions and behave as they would in their own homes. Overseas hosts may choose to remain silent rather than chance creating rifts in otherwise pleasant relationships.

"Lack of understanding of the host nation's educational system" and "lack of sensitivity to pupil differences" are additional categories of cultural/social mistakes, represented by 27% and 20% of the responding educators, respectively. Educators offering these responses seem to feel that U.S. student teachers do not fully understand the workings of the education system, sometimes evidenced by sweeping generalizations about overseas schools or by unfavorable comparisons between schools in the host nation and the United States. Also, the student teachers may attempt to compare the pupils too closely to those they taught in their Indiana classrooms, occasionally making inappropriate assumptions about what the pupils already "know" or how they will act in various situations.

Increased student teacher competencies resulting from overseas teaching. When asked in what areas U.S. student teachers have grown more competent as a result of an overseas teaching experience, educators in the host nations gave 73 responses, falling into the 9 categories shown in Table 4.

Insert Table 4 about here

The category to which by far the most educators responded (73%) is "general teaching skills/behaviors," with overseas educators perceiving growth to occur in lesson planning, teaching methodology, curriculum development, record keeping, pupil and self-assessment, and classroom management. U.S. student teachers who participate in international teaching programs return to the States armed with skills, ideas, and methods they may not have possessed prior to the overseas experience. Direct exposure to a foreign education system naturally leads to expansion of their skills repertoire, thus enhancing their teaching performance. "Cultural awareness and sensitivity" is another area in which an increase in competencies is observed (43% of the respondents). This would be anticipated, since some overseas educators had perceived cultural insensitivity as a major weakness on the part of U.S. student teachers. It stands to reason that prolonged exposure to a different culture would increase participants' awareness of the cultural nuances that may initially go undetected. Since a major goal of most overseas projects is to "increase cultural understanding," it is encouraging that foreign educators do see this as being approached.

The respondents identified several other areas in which growth occurs as a result of overseas teaching. Among these are the ability to work with pupils of varying ages and abilities (27% of respondents); knowledge of specific subjects, such as learning new games for physical education (17%); taking the initiative and accepting more responsibility in teaching (17%); knowledge of a different education system (17%) and of child development (13%); and socialization skills in dealing with pupils and faculty/staff (13%). As Table 4 indicates, at least 60% of the increased competencies relate to better teaching, methods, professional knowledge, and skills. Obviously, overseas educators

perceive international student teaching experiences as opportunities for professional, cultural, and social growth, thus increasing the competencies of young educators preparing to enter the work force.

Pupil benefits from the presence and efforts of U.S. student teachers. In addition to the positive outcomes accrued by U.S. student teachers as a result of overseas teaching, the respondents also believe that the pupils in the classroom benefit from exposure to these individuals, as shown in Table 5.

Insert Table 5 about here

The primary benefit that a vast majority of overseas educators (80%) see befalling their pupils is the increased cultural knowledge and insights about the United States that are gained through direct interaction with the U.S. student teachers. Respondents offered comments such as these:

- The pupils enjoyed hearing and talking about the U.S.A.; they have heard the reality and not the myth of the U.S.A.
- They learned first-hand that all Americans do not fit the stereotype.
- It has been very refreshing and interesting to hear about American schools. The pupils have an idea of what their American counterparts are like.
- They have met one of "them," been taught by one of "them"--gained first-hand knowledge of language and cultural differences/similarities.

It appears, then, that U.S. student teachers and their overseas pupils join in a reciprocal relationship, with cultural insights and learnings being among the most important outcomes gained by both groups. Related to this is the benefit of having had a personal relationship with a U.S. citizen, cited by 40% of the respondents. Said one Scottish educator,

> The pupils have rubbed shoulders and made friends with a young, highly motivated, skillful teacher from the U.S., who was fun and sensitive towards the children.

Miscellaneous responses account for about one third of the educators' comments (33%). For example, a teacher in an extremely rural area of Scotland, stated, "Our school, having only three teachers, benefits immensely from another pair of hands being made available." An English primary teacher wrote, "Some pupils have taken addresses to correspond with school children in the U.S.A., which may lead to lasting friendships."

New language experiences are another benefit perceived by overseas educators (27%) in that pupils develop their listening skills and tolerance by exposure to an unfamiliar accent and phraseology, and that they acquire an "appreciation that English usage and spelling as they know it is not the only 'correct' way." Finally, the pupils benefit by an enrichment of their education in specific subject areas (23% of respondents), such as more specialized knowledge of American History (especially for those pupils preparing for their external exam in this subject) and the acquisition of new skills and games in physical education.

Perceived goals motivating U.S. student teachers to seek overseas placement. When asked what they believe are the real goals motivating U.S. students to seek and complete teaching assignments in overseas schools, the survey respondents listed 61 possible goals which combined into six categories. These are outlined in Table 6.

Insert Table 6 about here

Nearly all of the educators (93%) believe that U.S. student teachers are motivated by a desire to expand their education and gain experience. Typical responses are as follows:

- I think, all to the good, they not only see another way of life, but also a very different view of education which can only improve their professionalism.
- They broaden their experience with the educational world--schools, teachers, children, methods, organization, etc.
- Give me the chance, and I would go to you! Seriously, it is a wonderful opportunity to broaden personal and professional horizons.

The category of "travel" accounts for responses by 37% of the educators; this is an understandable goal, because for most Project participants, overseas student teaching marks their first excursion out of the United States, and they are determined to see and do all that time and finances will allow. "First-hand experience in a different society" is another goal that 23% of the respondents believe to be an important motivating force, as well as the opportunities to "search for roots" (13%) and "meet people/socialize" (13%). From the miscellaneous category (23%) comes this comment: "Overseas student teaching is an interesting opportunity and option, far removed from taking a credit within the confines of the university."

Most student teachers would probably agree with the overseas educators' perceptions pertaining to the importance of these goals. In fact, in a survey completed by 40 students presently preparing for their overseas teaching experience next academic year, the goals listed in Table 6 are among the reasons cited most frequently for desiring a student teaching assignment in an overseas nation.

Better preparation for overseas student teaching assignments. Overseas educators were asked to identify steps that U.S. student teachers could take to better prepare for classroom teaching assignments in the host nations. Their responses are classified in Table 7.

Insert Table 7 about here

Increasing their knowledge of methods and materials used in the host nation is believed by 63% of the respondents to be an important step U.S. student teachers can take in preparing for their overseas assignment. In the case of methods, for example, elementary student teachers should have a basic understanding of and be ready to participate in the "integrated day" approach to primary education, involving theme-based learning schemes, projects, and activities, as opposed to instruction in distinct subject areas only. Access to educational materials used in the host nations is extremely difficult, thus limiting the knowledge in this area that student teachers can acquire prior to their overseas experience. It is unfortunately often the case, too, that materials they will use while student teaching in-state are unavailable for their examination at many U.S. schools of education.

Twenty-seven (27) percent of the respondents suggest a need for earlier and more contact between the student teachers and host schools prior to the overseas experience. This is dependent, however, on the length of time it takes for students' placements to be arranged. In addition, it is sometimes the case that mail strikes in host nations delay the correspondence, or that headmasters allow students' letters to remain on their desks for several weeks before replying or passing communication responsibility to a classroom teacher.

Additional categorical groupings include increased direct classroom experience while in Indiana (23% of the educators); greater knowledge of specific areas of education in the host nations (17%), such as "infant" education for five- to seven-year-olds; increased interactions with citizens of the host nations who are residing in the United States (13%); and familiarization with language differences between the U.S. and host nations (13%). Except for the category of "increased classroom experience in the U.S.," all of the suggested steps involve learning, interaction, and communication relative to the overseas site, system, and people. These data seem to say that it is essential to provide special preparation for students who plan to go abroad--do not just send them "over there."

Overseas educators were also asked to list important topics that they believe should be incorporated in the preparatory study phase of the Overseas Student Teaching Project. Their 94 responses are grouped into 11 categories, outlined in Table 8.

Insert Table 8 about here

Again, lesson preparation/teaching methodology appears as a major concern of 77% of the overseas educators. Their comments imply that not only should the student teachers be informed of the practices they will encounter in the host schools, but that they should strive to be more accurate, thorough, and organized in their lesson preparation, presentation, and evaluation in general.

Other topics suggested by the British and Irish educators--most of which have been discussed in previous sections--are: education system of the host nations, including philosophy, practice, and issues (63% of respondents);

information on the specific school to which the U.S. student teacher has been assigned (37%); local and national culture (37%); pre-school and infant education (20%); interactions with successful former Project participants (13%); geography of the host nations (10%); language and dialect (10%); child development (10%); and increased communication between the student teachers and host schools (10%). Taking Tables 7 and 8 together, it appears that many of the steps U.S. student teachers should take to better prepare for overseas assignments end up being topics for preparatory study. In effect, when overseas educators make suggestions to U.S. student teachers, they are also making suggestions to state-side teacher trainers.

It should be reiterated that Overseas Project participants undergo fairly extensive preparation in which many of these topics are addressed. While it is impossible to anticipate every situation they may encounter in their host nations, the student teachers depart for their overseas sites having a relatively solid foundation of educational and cultural background knowledge, as well as an understanding of the more prominent educational and social issues and problems besetting the nations. Headmasters have frequently commended Project participants and Project staff on these required preparatory studies. Therefore, one is inclined to wonder about U.S. student teachers and in-service teachers who participate in international teaching programs without prior preparation for the schools and the cultures in which they will work and live. It seems that some degree of State-side preparation is prerequisite for overseas experiences to be maximally educational and successful. For that matter, business persons, students in other fields of study, and even American tourists going to foreign countries should familiarize themselves with the cultures they will be visiting. Not only would their experiences be more meaningful, but the

general image of U.S. travellers abroad would perhaps be enhanced.

Finally, in the miscellaneous category (27% of educators), comments include:

- The student teachers should be well-planned to visit as much of the country as possible, and even into the continent.
- They should understand why warm English ale is more powerful and flavoursome than its ice cold American counterpart!

Responsibilities of U.S. teacher educators. Lastly, survey respondents were asked to complete this sentence stem: "Teacher educators who prepare student teachers to teach in overseas schools should ensure that _____." The 52 responses given are organized as shown in Table 9.

Insert Table 9 about here

The responses listed by over half of the overseas educators (57%) reflect a need for U.S. teacher educators to ensure that up-to-date information is provided regarding education in the host nations and covering all aspects of the education system, from administrative organization to expectations of teachers to examination standards. Comparative educational studies are suggested by several respondents as one way of imparting this information.

Over one third of the educators (37%) gave responses which fall into the miscellaneous category; such a high percentage is likely due to the open-ended nature of this particular survey item. However, the responses are interesting, revealing, and worthy of mention:

- Students have a better knowledge of the English language as we use it.
- Students are warned of the atypicality of experiences that evolve from culture shock.

- Students are placed in schools where the best standards of building, resources, modern teaching methods, and opportunities to try new ideas are made available to him/her.

Asked one respondent, "Have the teacher educators had recent experience themselves of teaching overseas?" Stated another:

> Our student was totally independent, adaptable, and had a fairly good idea of what to expect in both living and teaching. The orientation program seemed pretty excellent, I think.

Twenty percent of the respondents believe that more classroom experience should be provided student teachers while in the U.S. Seventeen percent indicate that teacher educators should ensure student teachers have background information on the culture and mores of the host nations, and 17% suggest that having knowledge of the individual's specific teaching situation is necessary. A characteristic statement from this category is:

> Student teachers should be aware of the school they are going into. This includes intellectual capabilities of pupils, cultural and social background, parental attitudes, philosophy, etc.

Another 17% of the respondents clearly state that the student teachers' professional commitment should be ensured prior to their departure for the overseas schools. For example,

- The students see their teaching experience as paramount, not sight-seeing and socializing.
- It is made clear that this experience is a professional placement.

In spite of the strong emphasis on educational topics and the self-screening/staff selection measures taken during the preparatory phase of the Overseas Project, a few Project participants arrive in their host nations with successful, dedicated student teaching unfortunately not among their top priorities. This

is quickly sensed by the host educators and can often make the eight-week experience a long and trying time for all involved. Screening processes that result in just the right person for the right place or mission never seem to be perfect in the world of education. Certainly considerable thought must be given to applicant screening by educators involved in overseas placements.

Finally, 10% of the respondents suggest that a support system should be created for the duration of the student teachers' experience overseas, similar to the tutorial and pastoral contacts/supports provided to the British and Irish student teachers. However, it should be reiterated that Overseas Project participants have successfully completed at least nine weeks of closely supervised teaching in Indiana prior to going abroad; they could receive their State certification and a teaching contract. Thus, tutorial support systems while overseas, although highly beneficial, have been limited by university financial constraints to one supervisory visit that the students receive during the eight week period from a U.S. teacher educator.

Recommendations Based on Feedback from British and Irish Educators

Obviously, educators in England, Scotland, and Ireland hold a myriad of opinions and perspectives of U.S. student teachers participating in overseas teaching experiences in their schools. How might the findings gathered in this survey be utilized to improve the quality of existing and future overseas teaching programs?

First of all, there must be a preparatory component for participants that spans adequate time and content. The preparatory studies should contain a strong component of up-to-date information pertaining to the educational system of the host nations. Students should be expected to read current books,

articles, and other materials, followed by in-depth dialogue with Project staff during which the students' understanding of the material is ascertained. Additionally, these readings should be authored by scholars of the host nations, thus avoiding American perspectives on the education systems of other nations.

Without a solid foundation of background knowledge on which to build their experiences, U.S. student teachers will feel at a loss upon arriving in their host schools, and overseas educators will perceive them as unprepared to assume teaching responsibilities. Elementary teachers, for example, must have a clear understanding of the philosophy of British primary education in order to adapt to the "thematic" nature of progressive primary school classrooms. Secondary teachers should be fully aware of the organization and trends in the examination system of British secondary schools. For example, those going to Scotland and England should be generally familiar with the new Standard Grade and General Certificate of Secondary Education, respectively. Overseas project staff must ensure that the students are exposed to relevant information such as this, and that they are given direction in obtaining additional information on their own.

Secondary, cultural sensitivity must be fostered in student teachers facing international teaching experiences. According to Stone (1975), international experiences are exploited if students go abroad without adequate cultural orientation. He states, "A superficial involvement in a foreign culture, for instance, may only confirm one's prejudices as the tourists who circulate from the Hiltons to the Intercontinentals attest" (p. 9). Readings on other cultures, interactions with citizens of foreign nations, and discussions of social and cultural issues and concerns are necessary to promote a multicultural, pluralistic outlook in the student teachers. Specific information should be provided regarding cultural "do's and don'ts." International scholars residing

on university and college campuses could serve as guest speakers, sharing their experiences and insights as participants in new and different cultures. Usually there are several such scholars, and probably in most cases they are under-utilized.

Thirdly, overseas project staff should work closely with students during their in-state student teaching, providing them with constructive feedback and suggestions which may facilitate their transition to teaching in the overseas classrooms. For example, supervisors should ensure that student teachers are thoroughly planning their lessons, carefully selecting teaching methods and strategies, effectively managing the classroom, and regularly and fairly evaluating pupil progress. It has been our experience that student teachers having difficulties with these skills while in Indiana find them no easier to perform once overseas in a different environment with a new set of expectations.

Furthermore, while student teaching in-state, participants could be encouraged to experiment with some of the techniques they may be expected to employ in the host schools, assuming their classroom teachers are agreeable, of course. For example, elementary student teachers might organize a thematic teaching unit along the lines of the "integrated day" approach. They might try to plan and teach more creatively with less reliance on teachers' guidebooks for ideas. Perhaps then the absence of such guidebooks in the overseas schools would be less daunting.

Fourthly, the natural enthusiasm of the student teachers, as they anticipate their overseas teaching and living experiences, should be maintained. Evening seminars, workshops, and staff-student interactions should contain elements which will serve to further "whet their appetites" for the overseas experience. Informal talks by citizens of the host nations, slides of scenic places, records

and/or live performances of traditional folk music, and overseas addresses where students could write for information are examples of elements that would maintain interest and enthusiasm, and encourage the students to seek out additional facts on their own.

Finally, Project staff should ensure that student teachers are approaching the overseas experience maturely and professionally. Educators in the host nations want U.S. students who are competent, responsible, and dedicated to teaching children and youth. Attempts should be made to determine the students' true reasons for wanting to participate in international teaching experiences. Above all, students must realize that they go predominantly to learn--about another education system, about a different culture, about themselves--and not to condemn foreign ways, change people, or extol the virtues of the United States.

Conclusion

We live in a time where international concerns have moved to the forefront of our existence, where one's attention is continually being drawn beyond the boundaries of his or her own nation. The need has been recognized for a more informed United States populace, for a broader understanding of the pluralistic world in which we live and of mutual influence of nation upon nation. According to Moore and Tull (1983),

> More than any other time in our history, teachers have the responsibility for acquiring tools that will help students who are increasingly affected by cross-cultural issues. Students need to know how to analyze cross-cultural questions of value that require an international point of view. However, at this time, far too many of our teachers are not capable of meeting this challenge. (p. 147)

Responsibility for increasing teacher knowledge lies with teacher training institutions across the United States. As when colleges and universities responded to the need for greater multicultural awareness by incorporating relevant units into pre- and in-service programs, teacher educators must now strive to develop and include international units involving global values, interdependences, economic relations, and so forth. If topics such as these permeated all of teacher education, teachers of today and tomorrow would be better informed and better equipped to prepare new generations for their responsibilities in this interdependent world.

This paper has presented feedback obtained from educators in England, Scotland, and Ireland pertaining to their beliefs and perceptions of U.S. student teachers who have worked and lived in their schools and communities. Based on this feedback, we can conclude that new learnings, insights, and sensitivities are gained not only by the U.S. student teachers, but by the pupils and adults in the host nation as well. Overseas educators' feedback can be used to enhance and improve existing international teaching programs and to aid in the development of new ones. It can serve as encouragement and positive reinforcement to those education majors and teacher trainers who invest high amounts of energy and concern to make overseas experiences and international learning really happen.

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Table 1: Preparatory Requirements for the Overseas Student Teaching Project

- 3.2 grade point average or better
- Attendance at 9 evening seminars--approximately 24 instructional hours
- Successful completion of 2 interviews over required books
- Submission of at least 5 abstracts over additional required readings
- Submission of term paper
- Attendance and participation at a 2 1/2- day workshop
- A minimum of 9 weeks of in-state student teaching, with 7 additional weeks for special education majors and students receiving teaching endorsements
- Involvement of student teacher in 7 structured classroom observations and related follow-up conferences with classroom teacher and university supervisor

Table 2

Greatest Professional Strengths* of U.S. Student Teachers

"Strengths" category	Percent of total responses	No. of educators listing each response	Percent of educators listing each response
Social skills with faculty/staff and pupils	19	15	50
Adaptability	16	13	43
Enthusiasm	14	11	36
Addition of competent staff member	11	9	30
New/well-prepared materials/lessons	11	9	30
Willingness to learn	7	6	20
Willingness to participate	7	6	20
Highly motivated	6	5	17
Confidence	3	2	7
Caring attitude	3	2	7
Miscellaneous	3	2	7

*N = 80 responses from 30 educators

Table 3

Cultural/Social Strengths* and "Mistakes"** of U.S. Student Teachers

	Percent of total responses	No. of educators listing each response	Percent of educators listing each response
A. "Strengths" category			
Firsthand cultural knowledge of U.S.	26	17	57
Socialization skills	26	17	57
Confidence	13	9	30
Miscellaneous	13	9	30
Adaptability	10	7	23
Enthusiasm	6	4	13
Keenness to communicate	6	4	13
B. "Mistakes" category			
No mistakes were made	17	9	30
Overly direct/confident	17	9	30
Language differences	17	9	30
Lack of cultural sensitivity	15	8	27
Lack of understanding of host nation's educational system	14	8	27
Lack of sensitivity to pupil differences	10	6	20
Miscellaneous	10	6	20

*N = 67 responses from 30 educators

**N = 55 responses from 30 educators

Table 4

Increased Competencies* of U.S. Student Teachers as a Result of Overseas Assignment

Increased competencies categories	Percent of total responses	No. of educators listing each response	Percent of educators response
Increased competencies category			
General teaching skills/behaviors	30	22	73
Cultural awareness/sensitivity	18	13	43
Ability to work with pupils of varying abilities and ages	11	8	27
Miscellaneous	10	7	23
Knowledge of specific subjects	7	5	17
Taking the initiative in teaching	7	5	17
Insights into different education systems	7	5	17
Social skills with faculty/staff/ pupils	5	4	13
Knowledge of child development	5	4	13

*N = 73 responses from 30 educators

Table 5

Benefits* to Pupils as Result of U.S. Student Teachers' Presence/Efforts

"Benefits" category	Percent of total responses	No. of educators listing each response	Percent of educators listing each response
Increased cultural knowledge/insights about the U.S.A.	40	24	80
Personal relationship with an American	20	12	40
Miscellaneous	16	10	33
New language experiences	13	8	27
Enrichment of education in specific areas	11	7	23

*N = 61 responses from 30 educators

Table 6

Perceived Goals* Motivating U.S. Student Teachers to Seek Overseas Placements

"Goals" category	Percent of total responses	No. of educators listing each response	Percent of educators listing each response
Expand education/gain experience	46	28	93
Travel	18	11	37
Learn about another society	11	7	23
Miscellaneous	11	7	23
Search for "roots"	7	4	13
Meet people/socialize	7	4	13

*N = 61 responses from 30 educators

Table 7

Steps* U.S. Student Teacher Should Take to Better Prepare for an Overseas Assignment

"Steps" category	Percent of total responses	No. of educators listing each response	Percent of educators listing each response
Increase knowledge of methods/materials used in host nation	36	19	63
Greater and earlier contact between host school and student teacher/ U.S. university	15	8	27
Increased classroom experience in U.S.	13	7	23
Greater knowledge of specific areas of education in host nation.	10	5	17
Miscellaneous	10	5	17
More interactions with citizens of host nation who are in U.S.	8	4	13
Familiarization with language differences	8	4	13

*N = 52 responses from 30 educators

Table 8

Important Topics* for Preparatory Study

"Topic" category	Percent of total responses	No. of educators listing each response	Percent of educators listing each response
Lesson preparation/teaching methodology	25	23	77
Education system of host nation	20	19	63
Specific school to which student has been assigned	12	11	37
Culture (local & nationwide)	12	11	37
Miscellaneous	9	8	27
Preschool/infant education	6	6	20
Presentations by former Project participants	4	4	13
Geography of host nation	3	3	10
Language and dialect	3	3	10
Child development	3	3	10
More communication with host nation	3	3	10

*N = 94 responses from 30 educators

Table 9

Responsibilities* of U.S. Teacher Educators

The following categories were derived in response to this sentence stem: "Teacher educators who prepare student teachers to teach in overseas schools should ensure that _____."

"Responsibilities" category	Percent of total responses	No. of educators listing each response	Percent of educators listing each response
Provide information regarding education in host nation	33	17	57
Miscellaneous	21	11	37
Provide more classroom experience in U.S.	12	6	20
Background information on mores of host nation	10	5	17
Knowledge of student teacher's specific situation	9	5	17
Ensure student teacher is approaching experience professionally	9	5	17
Ensure support system for student teachers while abroad	6	3	10

*N = 52 responses from 30 educators